



mothers2mothers

Skoll Awardee Profile

Organization Overview

Key Info

Social Entrepreneur	Gene Falk
Year Awarded	2008
Issue Area Addressed	Education, Health
Sub Issue Area Addressed	Health Delivery, Women's and Girls' Education
Countries Served	Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa, Swaziland, Uganda, Zambia
Website	http://www.m2m.org
Twitter handle	m2mtweets
Facebook	http://www.facebook.com/mothers2mothersintl
Youtube	http://www.youtube.com/user/mothers2mothers

About the Organization

mothers2mothers is an international not-for-profit that bolsters African healthcare systems and improves the health of families while delivering empowerment opportunities for women.

Africa's health systems are under tremendous strain. According to the World Health Organization, the continent has a shortage of 4.2 million healthcare workers, and by 2030 that figure will increase to 6.1 million. As a result, there are significant challenges to ensuring those who need healthcare can access services, remain in care, and adhere to their treatment. Maternal and child mortality rates remain high—usually due to entirely preventable causes. This lack of healthcare workers is also a major contributor to the HIV/AIDS pandemic. 200 babies are infected with HIV each day in sub-Saharan Africa, while nearly 7,000 adolescent girls and young women are infected globally each week, the majority of whom live in the region. Other factors standing in the way of the Global Goal of eliminating HIV by 2030 include the HIV-related stigma and discrimination still prevalent in many African communities, and a lack of accurate health information.

mothers2mothers (m2m) tackles these challenges by bolstering national healthcare systems, while simultaneously delivering paid employment opportunities for women. m2m achieves this through a peer-to-peer approach that trains and helps empower HIV-positive women to become community health workers. These “Mentor Mothers” work in local communities providing support at the household level and at understaffed health facilities. They ensure that women and their families receive quality healthcare education and services, are linked to the right clinical services and are supported on their treatment journey. This integrated model of providing services along the continuum of care across facilities and communities improves access, uptake of treatment, adherence, and retention in care.

Started in Cape Town, South Africa in 2001, m2m has reached nearly 1.5 million HIV-positive women in 10 countries. With an initial focus on preventing mother-to-child transmission of HIV, the organization has innovated and built on its strengths to expand its programmatic scope, delivering priority and targeted services at almost all stages of life. m2m Mentors now provide family-centered support for a range of related health and social issues spanning pregnancy, birth, childhood, and adolescence. m2m also partners with governments and other NGOs on the adoption of its program to spread the Mentor Mother Model and its benefits.

Impact

- A track record of scaling services and proven impact, with 1.95 million new clients enrolled in 2016 alone (directly and through partnerships), including women, men, infants, children, and adolescents.
- Virtual elimination of mother-to-child transmission (MTCT) of HIV for three years in a row among m2m's enrolled clients.
- Employment of Mentor Mothers creates professional opportunities and economic well-being for women who are often among society's most marginalized. 1,600 HIV-positive women were directly employed in 2016 alone.
- Mentor Mother Model adopted as national policy in Kenya and South Africa, leading to mainstreaming into national and provincial healthcare system.

- Leadership in U.S. and global initiatives to eliminate pediatric HIV transmission.

Path to Scale

Partnerships to Replicate the Model

m2m provides support and technical assistance to nongovernmental organizations, health ministries, and others to ensure the model is disseminated independently of m2m.

Social Entrepreneur

Long-time friends Mitch and Gene pursued very different paths: Mitch became a doctor and worked in developing countries, while Gene was successful in business and became a senior media executive. In 2000, Mitch moved to Cape Town, South Africa. His medical practice focused his attention on women who learned that they were HIV positive during their first prenatal visit. Many of them fled the clinic, never to return. Those who stayed did not get much counseling or education about their disease from the overworked doctors and nurses. A third of them gave birth to HIV positive babies. He realized that the other two-thirds – HIV-positive mothers who remained strong and took steps, including clinical treatments, to reduce the risk of infecting their babies – could be trained to work alongside clinic staff to comfort and counsel the terrified young women who had just learned their HIV status at the prenatal clinic. He launched m2m in 2001. Gene, who had been involved in HIV/AIDS issues for nearly 20 years, visited the first m2m site while on vacation. He was struck by the parallels to the early days of HIV/AIDS in the U.S., and realized that Mitch, who was running m2m on a shoestring, did not have the experience to build an organization capable of achieving global impact. So he moved to Cape Town and served as m2m's executive director for a decade. At the time of the Award, m2m's "Mentor Mothers" were counseling and educating newly diagnosed HIV-positive pregnant women and new mothers at 155 sites in South Africa and Lesotho, providing important patient support during critical junctures to keep HIV-positive women and their children healthy.

Ambition for Change

Clinics all over the world have the capacity to provide the customized, comprehensive education and psychosocial support needed to ensure that families access and use available treatments for best possible health outcomes.